

LOS ANGELES' HEALTH OFFICER ON TRANSMISSIBLE DISEASES.

MEMBERS of the Los Angeles County Medical Association were treated to timely remarks at the regular bi-weekly meeting held last night, in a paper read by Dr. Sumner J. Quint, assistant health officer, on a "Review of Some of the Transmissible Diseases." The physicians of Los Angeles were criticised for their carelessness in withholding information concerning infectious diseases from the health office. The dangers that lurk in the uncooked vegetables, such as lettuce, cabbage and radishes, were emphasized, while the menace to the general health in the expectorations of consumptives was brought out in the paper. Dr. Quint said in part:

"The great advance of late years in sanitary regulations has largely reduced the number of mortality of contagious diseases and nearly stamped out some of them entirely. Typhus fever at present is hardly known, and General Wood has nearly or entirely abolished yellow fever in Cuba. By strict quarantine regulations in San Francisco the bubonic plague has been kept within bounds.

"Since the government has instituted a thorough system of meat inspection throughout the country, and the different States, counties and cities have instituted a systematic inspection of milk, fruit and vegetables, with the proper disposal of sewerage, the channels of infection have been reduced to the minimum.

"There still remains great opportunities for improvement in this direction when we see our fruit markets exposed to the dust of our streets and trampled over by infected flies. Also in the handling of lettuce, celery and the uncooked vegetables.

"All this, with the improved method of treatment and prophylaxis, as vaccination, anti-toxin and serum therapy in general, has helped the practitioner to combat these diseases when they arise and gives us a very bright prospect of either annihilation of most of the transmissible diseases, or at least greatly reducing their mortality. Within the last few years the mortality from these diseases has been reduced from ten to fifty per cent in spite of the fact that there are still among us a few antiquated fossils who do not believe in these measures and the timid young practitioner who is afraid to act, not to mention osteopathy, Christian science, mental healers and the like. Some of our very best physicians wait for a report from the health department before injecting their diphtheria patients, and thereby lose twenty-four hours of the most precious time, which often means death to the poor little patient struggling for breath.

"We have in this city a death rate from diphtheria ranging between ten and fifteen per cent. A very large number of these deaths are due to the late use of anti-toxin or to the non-use by the unbeliever. It is the custom in some Eastern cities

to prosecute such negligence, and an advance in that direction in our city would be advantageous.

"The general opinion is that tuberculosis is transmitted through the respiratory tract by inhaling, mixed with dust, the sputum of patients suffering from pulmonary tuberculosis. Our salubrious climate attracts many of these unfortunates to this Coast, and with our well-founded notions of the transmission of the disease, patients should be instructed on this clause of the sanitary law; i. e., that they must not expectorate in the street, but that the sputum must be destroyed either by cremation or antiseptics.

"There is no class of invalids that show as much carelessness as the consumptive. He expectorates on our streets, in our parks, and infects the lodging-houses from the most fashionable hotel to the 25-cent rooming-house.

"The majority of the practitioners of this city pay no attention to our sanitary law in this regard, which reads as follows: 'Every physician shall report to the Health Officer every patient he may have, within the city limits, afflicted with Asiatic cholera, typhus fever, yellow fever, smallpox, scarlet fever, diphtheria, or so-called membranous croup, typhoid fever, glanders, leprosy, tuberculosis and chicken-pox.'

"The Board of Health has volunteered to have the quarantine officer fumigate those houses infested by these tuberculous patients, and we are very willing and glad at all times to coöperate with physicians in the endeavor to prevent the extension of tuberculosis without in any way incurring the displeasure of the patient.

"As an illustration of the manner in which our physicians report these cases: Since January 1, 1902, there have been 342 deaths of tuberculosis, with only twenty-one cases reported to the health department by fourteen physicians, and who shall number those living afflicted with this disease, and not reported in any way while under treatment with physicians, to say nothing of those who go about without medical care?

"As the specific micro-organism is contained in the discharges from the bowels and kidneys of typhoid patients, it is manifest that the dejecta coming in contact with articles of food or drink, will contaminate them, and thereby convey the disease. The most common method of spread of enteric fever is through water, the soil, milk and green vegetables, such as lettuce, celery and radishes.

"In May of this year a Los Angeles physician attended a case of typhoid fever at a neighboring dairy. The records of the health department do not show that the case was reported. By this criminal carelessness on the part of the physician, the milk became infected, and fifteen cases of typhoid

occurred among the consumers of milk from this one dairy, and the most deplorable part of the negligence was that three deaths occurred.

"The tearing up of an old sewer at one of the principal hospitals of this city probably caused an outbreak in that institution which resulted in the loss of several lives.

"Great care should be exercised both by the laity and the physician in using every precaution possible to prevent the spread of this dread disease.

"Beneficial results may be obtained by careful investigation of drinking water (boiling when necessary,) and making sure of the source of our provisions; especially that part of our menu which goes on our table uncooked. These simple precautions will tend to greatly lessen the sporadic cases that occur.

"As typhoid fever is purely an infectious disease, the sources of transmission should not be overlooked in any particular. All articles of the patient's clothing which are soiled, such as sheet, napkins and towels used by the patient should be boiled thoroughly to destroy all germs. Rubber sheets should be used to protect the bedding from dejecta. The excretion should be destroyed at once by strong disinfectants, as bi-chloride of mercury and chloride of lime.

"I wish to state that the object of this paper is simply intended as a most friendly criticism on the local medical profession in the way they observe or fail to observe, the sanitary laws which the health department is trying to uphold in order that this line of disease may be limited as much as possible."

—Los Angeles Times.

BUBONIC PLAGUE IN CALIFORNIA.

History of the Outbreak and Resolutions Passed at the Conference of State and Provincial Boards of Health of North America, Held at New Haven, Conn., October 29, 1902.

[Specially reported for *American Medicine*.]

AT the meeting of the State and Provincial Boards of Health of North America, held at New Haven, Conn., October 29, 1902, the following history of the outbreak of bubonic plague in California was recited, and the appended resolutions were passed. The preamble and resolutions were presented by the delegates from Maine, and their adoption was moved by the delegates representing the State of Maryland, seconded by the delegates from Pennsylvania and Connecticut. Seventeen States were represented and voting, and in addition the United States Army, Navy and Marine-Hospital Service and Canada were represented, their representatives, however, not voting. The text of the preamble and resolutions is as follows:

WHEREAS, Bubonic plague has been present in California since March, 1900, information as to the extent of the disease being withheld by the local authorities, no effective measures of restriction having been put into operation, and the history of the outbreak, so far as we can ascertain from authoritative sources, being as follows:

March 6, 1900, a case of bubonic plague was discovered by Dr. W. H. Kellogg, bacteriologist to the San Francisco Board of Health, the diagnosis being confirmed by Surgeon J. J. Kinyoun, of the United States Marine-Hospital Service.

March 7, the City Board of Health of San Francisco quarantined the whole of Chinatown, pending investigation, the quarantine being removed 60 hours later by order of the Mayor.

March 11, another death from plague occurred.

March 12, the City Board of Health, being without funds, attempted an inspection of Chinatown by

volunteer inspectors, the Chinese being thereby incited to conceal all cases of sickness.

March 19, two more deaths from plague. The Mayor provided \$1,000 for inspection and disinfection. The death rate for Chinatown subsequently dropped so far below earlier experience as to suggest successful concealment or suppression of the facts concerning death as well as sickness.

April 4, and May 2 and 13, other cases of plague discovered.

May 15, a case of plague discovered. Demands were made of the City Board of Health and the United States Marine-Hospital Service to suppress the facts. The Surgeon-General of the United States Marine-Hospital Service wired advice to make house-to-house inspection in Chinatown, to disinfect Chinatown, to establish a pesthouse and house of observation, destruction of rats, and the employment of Hatkine's antipest inoculation.

May 17, State border inspection begun by the United States Marine-Hospital Service. Transportation companies ordered not to furnish transportation to Chinese and Japanese except upon certificate of Marine-Hospital officer.

May 18, commercial associations urged the adoption of the Surgeon-General's suggestion, particularly as to the use of Hatkine's inoculation. City Board of Health willing to undertake this work. The City Board of Health officially announced the presence of bubonic plague and called upon the State Board of Health for aid.

May 19, house-to-house inspection begun. Chinese resist. Chinese and Japanese begin to leave the city. No effective restrictions. State Board